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WHA/CAR FOR BAHAMAS DESK OFFICER JOSLYN MACK-WILSON  
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BF](#)  
SUBJECT: BY-ELECTIONS IN THE BAHAMAS -- FREE T-SHIRTS KEY TO SUCCESS

REF: NASSAU 24

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¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The resignation earlier this month of a opposition MP will result in a by-election on February 16. Traditionally, a Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) stronghold, the by-election may be a bellwether for the 2012 general elections. Funding is going to be a key issue in the race as many political commentators have noted that the winner is usually the one who can pump the most money into the area and provide the most free t-shirts and give-aways. END SUMMARY.

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#### Background on the Constituency

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¶2. (U) There are approximately 4,200 voters in the Constituency of Elizabeth. The seat was won by PLP Malcolm Addereley in 2007 by less than 50 votes. The constituency is one that has noticeably suffered during the recent economic downturn, losing 98 jobs when Pepsi-Cola closed its office there in 2008. Adderley gave a 22 minute, 12 page resignation speech in the House of Assembly in which he excoriated the leadership of the PLP for undermining and disrespecting him, calling his time in office "the worst personal experience my family and I have ever faced." Christie accused the Free National Movement (FNM) government of undermining democracy by offering Adderley a Supreme Court position which he believes necessitated Adderley's resignation. PLP Chairman Bradley Roberts accused Adderley of being a "political prostitute" and remarked that both Adderley and Kenyatta Gibson (the first MP to resign from the PLP) were trying to destabilize the party. PLP member Raynard Rigby accused Christie of "being asleep at the wheel" while many other party members also questioned why Christie had not called on Adderley to resign during the months of rumors that led up to his resignation. The resignation of two sitting MPs in just over a year could be a sign of discontent and disunity within the party.

¶3. (U) While media reports are generally predicting a PLP victory, many articles indicate that Elizabeth residents are open to a third party candidate and are "sick of both parties." Some of the third party candidates have called for campaign finance reform in the run up to the election, an acknowledgment of the view that whoever spends the most will win.

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#### The Candidates

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14. (U) The candidates vying for the seat include Ryan Pinder for the PLP, Dr. Duane Sands for the FNM, Cassius Stuart for the Bahamas Democratic Movement (BDM), Dr. Andre Rollins for the National Development Party (NDP), Rodney Moncur for the Worker's Party and Godfrey Pinder for the United Christian Love Revolution Movement (UCLRM). Contacts in many of the political parties have told PolOff that the FNM are using the election to test their strength so they can decide when to call another general election. Media outlets also suggest that the PM may be using the election to test the waters to see how the FNM would perform in 2012.

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PLP Candidate - Ryan Pinder

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15. (C) Ryan Pinder is a 35 year old tax attorney and appears often in the press to comment on a wide variety of economic issues to include tax information exchange agreements and intellectual property rights. He currently serves as vice chairman of the

party. He has strong ties to the U.S. and received an MBA and Law degree from the University of Miami. Pinder was a dual Bahamian-U.S. citizen but renounced his U.S. citizenship on January 19 after bowing to pressure from his own party. He has advised the Embassy that he will be requesting future B1/B2 visas to conduct business at his law firm in Florida. One newspaper, The Punch, has already played on his ties to the U.S., running a headline alleging that "Ryan May Go Back 'Home' to America if times get too tough in The Bahamas. He is a Member of the National General Council of the PLP and is co-chair of the Committee on Foreign Relations and Foreign Trade. Pinder reportedly beat out five other PLP contenders who coveted the seat. His father was the first white PLP cabinet minister and an MP for Malcolm Creek (now Elizabeth) and St. John's constituencies. His father was also a cabinet minister in the Linden Pindling administration as Minister of Local Government and Family Island Affairs.

16. (C) One of Pinder's primary campaign focuses is health insurance. He said he is committed to national healthcare for all regardless of one's ability to pay. At a PLP rally in Elizabeth on January 19, one speaker acknowledged that although Bahamians lived in paradise, they faced the "ever present risk of dying in paradise due to a lack of health insurance." Pinder is a relative unknown in Bahamian politics and has been criticized by the public for his lack of experience, with one recent editorial noting "Pinder is a relative newcomer who should wait his turn." Pinder is noticeably one of the few white members of his party and the role that his race will play in garnering grassroots PLP support for him as a candidate remains to be seen.

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PLP Rally Accuses PM of Political Tricks and  
Undermining Election

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17. (U) Hundreds of people attended the PLP rally on January 19 to show their support for Pinder. Despite the fact that Pinder is a white member of an overwhelmingly black party, one post contact

told PolOff that the constituency is so heavily rooted in the PLP that "they could nominate a puppy and it would be elected." The focus of many of the rally speakers was Prime Minister Ingraham's recent decision to grant temporary protective status (TPS) to illegal Haitian detainees. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fred Mitchell, remarked that "Satan and his cabinet are meeting right now but from what I gather Satan forgot to tell his cabinet about certain things [TPS decision]." While not directly criticizing the decision, the PLP said they were not consulted and argued that the move was designed to "cause strife and separation." The government was criticized for the high crime rate, unfavorable economic climate, high unemployment and the perceived "political tricks" which led to the need for a by election. Chairman Roberts said the PM was using the earthquake in Haiti to distract Bahamians from the current worsening conditions in their country and for political gain, noting "you need Hubert like you need the swine flu." MP Hope Strong noted that although the government had invested USD 52 million in dredging Nassau harbor to allow in bigger and better cruise ships, tourism numbers were actually down. Deputy leader Phillip Brave Davis accused the FNM of "raising taxes on children's underwear and the bible."

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FNM Candidate - Dr. Duane Sands  
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18. (C) The FNM candidate is Dr. Duane Sands, a prominent heart. A cousin of National Security Minister Tommy Turnquest, Sands received his Doctorate in medicine from Johns Hopkins University. In July of 1994 he returned to The Bahamas and founded the Cardiothoracic and Vascular Institute of The Bahamas. Sands currently serves as Chief of Service for the Department of Surgery at the Princess Margaret Hospital, Chairman of the Bahamas Medical Council, Trustee of the Sir Victor Sassoon Bahamas Heart Foundation, member of the Caribbean Cardiac Society and a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He also serves as a Director of the Central Bank of the Bahamas. Sands described the FNM as the underdogs in the race, acknowledging the constituency was a PLP stronghold, he said "This is a good position to be in because it's their constituency to lose - and they will lose." Sands has been difficult for the PLP to criticize because he is well respected in the community. Therefore, the focus has been on aligning him with the policies of PM Ingraham. During the PLP rally Brave Davis noted that crime was "crippling the country" and he exclaimed, "our people are dying good doctor...no heart surgeon can heal the mess that the FNM has wrought." Because the last election in Elizabeth was so close, the FNM could potentially win the seat if they are able to execute an aggressive campaign and contribute a significant amount of resources to the area. The FNM will hold rallies in Elizabeth on January 28, February 4 and 15.

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BDM Candidate - Cassius Stuart  
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19. (C) The Bahamas Democratic Movement (BDM) candidate is 38 year old businessman Cassius Stuart. Stuart told PolOff that the constituency was "the Ohio of The Bahamas" and the FNM were using the election to test how strong they are given the current high rate of crime, unemployment and economic conditions in the country. While originally a party of younger members, the BDM now boasts a very diverse age range and has garnered significant media attention in this election. Stuart said the only defining line between the BDM and the other two major political parties was resources. He said if he could raise USD 250 thousand he would win the election,

noting that he needed to get free t-shirts out into the community. Stuart told PolOff that he was approached by PLP leader Christie who said he was looking for someone to mold to eventually take over leadership of the PLP. He said he told Christie he could not align himself with either of the major parties because of the endemic corruption in both. Stuart told PolOff that the BDM had already been working hard in Elizabeth on financial relief, getting air conditioning for the Post Office and providing dialysis machines for clinics.

¶10. (C) Stuart was highly critical of FNM policies which he said have caused the country to be in such a position that it could "easily become another Haiti." He told PolOff that the U.S. has a significant stake in not allowing this to happen because "you don't want boat loads of Bahamians to begin arriving on your shores." He also raised what he characterized as "significant concerns" about the GCOB being courted by the People's Republic of China. He likened PM Ingraham to Robert Mugabe and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and said the PM was "letting the country go to hell and allowing it to be bought by China." He criticized the current education system which recently received a D grade average at the secondary level. Stuart said the system "was randomly drifting...we're stuck on a treadmill and we're moving backwards." He echoed the sentiments of many in civil society who have been calling for a national vision. If elected, Stuart said he plans to push for the country to embrace e-commerce and invest in innovative technology because "when the boat sinks, it sinks for all of us."

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#### Other Third Party Candidates

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¶11. (U) The Fledgling National Development Party (NDP) is led by Chairman Dr. Andre Rollins. His party has been calling for a televised national debate before the election as well as transparency in campaign financing. Rollins said his party would spend no more than USD 18.5 thousand to contest the election and called other party's estimates of expenditures "outrageous and obscene." He accused them of buying votes and thereby threatening democracy. Rollins told the press that any donations over their

budgeted amount would be donated to relief efforts in Haiti.

¶12. (U) The Worker's Party is led by Rodney Moncur who characterized the PLP and FNM as "a narrow class of relatives, friends and schoolmates, business partners and professionals who have dominated Bahamian politics for a whole generation." He accused both parties of mismanaging the economy and undermining the social fabric of the country and corrupting public institutions. He told the press that under the FNM, "public school have been deprived of financial support and are now breeding grounds for gangs."

¶13. (C) The most recent newcomer on the political scene is the United Christian Love Revolution Movement (UCLRM) led by Godfrey Pinder. Pinder told the press he would promote conservative politics for the country based on fundamental Christian principles. He said it was his aim to create "love universities" in The Bahamas which would teach law and theology. Pinder has a criminal record with a significant number of arrests for drug possession, smuggling and bribing public officials.

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Comment

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¶14. (C) The opposition party PLP is likely to win what promises to be a close election, which would boost their chances in the national elections. Despite favorable media attention for third party candidates, this race is strictly a PLP and FNM affair. A poor economy and increasing crime play favorably for the PLP. However, bolstering the position of the FNM was the poor performance and lack of resources that the previous PLP candidate was able to bring to the constituency. Although no one has publicly questioned Pinder's race, privately, contacts admit it could be a significant factor. The key will be the amount of resources each party is able to spend on the election.

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